

Wooden



Silver Fox

Silver Fox sticks are made of laminated rock maple, not hickory like 90% of the other drumsticks on the market. Al LeMert of Silver Fox told me that the company has spent five years researching laminating procedures to come up with a way to make their sticks as strong as (or stronger than) hickory, while having almost invisible glue lines.

Twenty different models are offered: 26, 58, 1A, 5A, 7A, Jazz, L/R, M/R, J/R, H/R, 5BX, R/1, R/2, 1S, 2S, 3S, 4S, M/B, M/S, and C/S. All but the 3S and 4S marching sticks are available with a "Del-Tip," which is made of a black acetal material that does not mark cymbals or drumheads. The *Del-Tip* is a cousin of the nylon tip, but seems to bring out a fuller fundamental on cymbals. (All models are available with a wood tip.) Nine of the Silver Fox models can be had as *Cinnamonstix*, which are red-dyed laminated maple sticks. The difference between these and other colored sticks is that there is no paint to chip. Also, the *Cinnamonstix* will not mark cymbals.

Heavy rockers should note that several Silver Fox models are 17" long, and weights of the *Rock* models range from 62 to 70 grams. Various models have been designed with a thicker neck and shoulder, as well.

All Silver Fox sticks are shipped straight, are pitch-paired, and are balanced within two to three grams per pair. The difference in feel and response between laminated maple and standard hickory is negligible, in my opinion. These sticks seem to hold up well/and the available models should please almost everyone.

Silver Fox's brochure gives complete specs on every model as far as length, neck, bead, taper, diameter, and approximate weight—much better than I could do here, so I recommend inspecting it for yourself.

If you want something just a bit different in wooden sticks, check out Silver Fox. Prices range from \$7.20 for wood-tip maple to \$7.50 for *Cinnamonstix* with wood tip, \$7.50 for *Del-Tip* maple, and \$8.00 for *Del-Tip Cinnamonstix*.



Pearl

The Pearl Drum Company has recently introduced drumsticks made in the USA. I had already seen their Japanese-made sticks (which I thought were great), and was curious to see what they're offering in the new American-made line.

Pearl's sticks are all made of hickory. Their butt ends are flattened out, exactly like the Zildjian sticks, which leads me to believe that they could be produced by the same drumstick firm. The specs for the Pearl models are a tiny bit different, though. Available models range from "standard" sizes 7A (Jazz), 5A (Jazz/Rock), 5B (Rock), and 26 (Hard Rock), up to "special" models named *Studio*, *Recording* (similar to their Japanese "Jeff Porcaro" model), and *The Dude*. The four standard models are available in either wood or nylon tip. (The nylon tips share the same basic shape; only the sizes are different.) The other three models come in wood tip only. An alternate *Hard Rock* stick is available with a large black nylon tip, a thicker neck and shorter taper, and 1/16" more in length.

The sticks have a light coat of varnish applied, but are still able to retain a "rough" feel—all the better for gripping. I found the Pearl drumsticks to hold up well to chipping and denting. The packaged pairs were fairly well matched in weight, and were all straight. In total, Pearl has a good quality pro line of wood sticks here. Wood tip models list for \$7.20; nylon tips list for \$7.35.

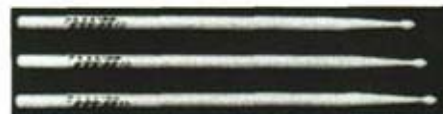


Zildjian

Already one of the world's leading cymbal manufacturers, Zildjian is also getting serious about drumsticks. They have nine models, all made of American hickory: 7A, Jazz, 5A, 3A, 28, 58, *Rock*, *Sessionmaster*, and *Absolute Rock*. All are available with either wood or nylon tips, except the *Absolute Rock* model, which has double butt ends. In addition to a natural finish, Zildjian also offers a choice of colors: red or black. These colors are not painted on, but are deep-penetrating stains. My testing proved the colored finishes to be quite durable.

Most of the models have a shorter taper than usual, and they all have flattened butt ends. Since Zildjian applies only a very thin coat of varnish, the sticks can be gripped better, because there is still a textured feel to them. I should mention that Zildjian's seamless nylon tips correspond pretty much to the shape of their wood tips, which is something some companies have only recently been doing. From what I've found, the tips are well-adhered and don't come off.

Zildjian employs a four-point check during manufacturing for mineral streaks, grain quality, imperfections, and straightness. All the models I tested were excellent, both physically and cosmetically. The "wear factor" of the sticks is quite low; they have good longevity. All in all, Zildjian drumsticks pass this review with flying colors. I hope they add more models in the near future. Retail price is \$7.25 for wood tip, \$7.35 for nylon tip.



Maxx Stix

Maxx Stix are made of American hickory, and most of their models are offered in three lengths: 16", 16 3/8", and 16 3/4". Avail-

by Bob Saydlowski, Jr.

Drumsticks

able models are: 5A, *Rock*, 56, and 28 (in either wood or nylon tip), plus *TH*, *RK*, *RK-26*, and *STAR* (in wood tip only).

Their *RK* stick has double butts, and is about the same diameter as a *Rock* model stick. The *RK-26* is also double-butted, but is enlarged to a 2B diameter. Maxx Stixx's *STAR* model is for ultra-heavy rock or drum corps use, and is only available in the *Super-Long* size.

The company *guarantees* that their sticks will last longer than any other wooden drumstick. Not being one to simply take someone's word for it, I put Maxx Stixx to the test with hard rimshots on a die-cast hoop, as well as other means of punishment under normal playing conditions. Since I don't normally break sticks myself, I gave a few pairs to some heavy rock players I know. The verdict was unanimous: It takes a lot to break one of these sticks. I'm told by the company that in order to achieve this durability, Maxx Stixx have a lower moisture level than other sticks, and use a special turning process.

Having a choice of three lengths in any given size might be a benefit for some drummers. For example, a drummer who likes a standard 56's general specifications might like it even more with some extra length on the stick. Maxx Stixx are coded to distinguish between lengths: The logo is either brown (*Regulars*), blue (*XXX-Tras*), or red (*Super Longs*). The sticks are durable, and their pricing makes them extremely competitive. Depending on length, a pair of Maxx Stixx retails at \$6.50, \$6.95, or \$7.50.

Grover

Grover Enterprises offers only four models of wooden sticks, but the company is quite meticulous about their procedure in matching and packaging. The four Grover models are: the red hickory *Model E/Ensemble*, a hickory *Model S/Symphonic*, and Canadian maple models *C/Concert* and *V2*. The *Model E* is very thin with an extremely small tip, and would be ideal for extra-low-volume playing. Both the *C* and *S* models are good sizes for rock playing.

All Grover sticks have a catalytic varnish and are waxed. The company holds the belief that pitch-pairing alone does not achieve good mating of stick pairs, because the pitch of a stick is dependent on weight, mass, and density. So, it's quite possible that sticks paired only by pitch could have different weights. Grover eliminates this possibility by computer weighing each stick

within a one-gram tolerance. After the sticks are grouped by weight, they are then pitch-paired within one semi-tone. They are then rolled for straightness. Finally, each pair of sticks is packaged with a card, indicating its weight.

I was sent two pairs of *Model S* sticks, one weighing 47 grams, the other weighing 60 grams. Even though the models were identical, there was a marked difference in their feel and rebound. No other manufacturer I know of goes to these lengths to assure a precisely matched pair of drumsticks, and for that alone I rate these sticks highly.

The sticks have a smooth feel and perfect balance. Don't be put off by the model names. Grover sticks are certainly not *just* for use in symphony playing, they are for *all* drummers. Those players who aren't too fussy about their sticks probably won't benefit from the care Grover takes during their pairing, but drummers who are picky about their tools will feel good knowing that Grover sticks are expertly matched for them. Retail price is \$7.90 per pair.

Shawstix

Unfortunately, as I write this, Shawstix does not have any U.S. distribution. But I was so impressed with their product that I just had to include a mention of them in this *Close-Up*.

Shawstix are produced in England, and are available in 44 models (21 of which offer wood or machine-turned nylon tips). They also come in seven different wood types: American hickory, Japanese oak, maple, hardwood, lancewood, standard laminate, and colored laminate. Each pair of Shawstix is individually turned and sanded by hand, and then finished with a special hard lacquer.

I was only sent samples of their *SG* model (the famous "Steve Gadd" stick), but their other models span the ranges of perhaps the Vic Firth and Pro-Mark companies' combined. The various woods have different weights and densities, and it's intriguing to see how that affects the feel and performance of identical models. All the sticks I played with were top quality—free of defects, weighted and balanced evenly, and straight.

My enthusiasm for Shawstix lies in the fact that the choice of what to play is left up to the drummer, not the company. With the range of models and wood types available, any drummer would be almost cer-

tain to find a stick he or she likes. I hope that some distributor in the States will pick up Shawstix soon, as the variety and quality are fantastic.

Since several of the stick lines mentioned in this review may not be widely available, I've included the following address list. Drummers interested in further information may contact the companies directly.

Avedis Zildjian Co., Longwater Drive, Norwell, MA 02061

Silver Fox Percussion, P.O. Box 06884, Fort Myers, FL 33906

Pearl International, P.O. Box 11240, Nashville, TN 37222

Maxx Stixx, P.O. Box 181, Wonder Lake, IL 60097

Grover Enterprises, 29 Bigelow St., Cambridge, MA 02139

Shawstix, William Shaw & Co. (Scholes) Ltd., 273 Whitechapel Road, Scholes, Cleckheaton, West Yorkshire, BD19 6HN, ENGLAND.



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